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ABSTRACT

In a high school a problem existed in which 43 students in grades 9 through 12 received failing grades for the first semester due to excessive absenteeism. A target group of students with excessive school absences was identified by the school faculty. Intervention counseling sessions were held with these students. Of the 46 students, only 12 were involved in two counseling sessions. The purpose of the sessions was to increase student awareness of individual absences and of the district school board attendance policy. Other purposes of the counseling sessions were to provide the target students and the students' parents (or guardians) with information about an appeal process and the importance of school attendance. This program employed a questionnaire, attendance information, and appeal data in order to measure the success of the counseling sessions. All students belonging to the target group were involved in intervention counseling sessions. All students were made aware of the individual's number of absences and answered correctly all questions on an exit interview questionnaire. At the conclusion of the appeal process, 47 students received failing grades for the second semester. Of this 47, only 19 students belonged to the target group. Of the 19 students, 14 students were successful in presenting appeals and had the mandatory failure waived. It was concluded that intervention counseling helped to decrease student absences at the secondary school level. (ABL)

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COUNSELING SECONDARY STUDENTS TO DECREASE FAILURE DUE TO EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM

by

CARL D. BROWN

A Practicum Report

submitted to the faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education, Nova University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

July/1990

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Abstract - Final Report

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Descriptors: Secondary Education/ Attendance/ Non-attendance/ School Attendance/ Students' Attendance/ Counseling/

The high number of students receiving failing grades at a secondary school due to excessive absenteeism was addressed by an intervention counseling process. A target group of students with excessive school absences was identified by the school faculty. Intervention counseling sessions were held with the target students. The purpose of the sessions was to increase student awareness of individual absences and of the district school board attendance policy. Other purposes of the counseling sessions were to provide the target students and the student's parents (or guardians) with information about an appeal process and the importance of school attendance. This program employed a questionnaire, attendance information, and appeal data in order to measure the success of the counseling sessions. It was concluded that intervention counseling helped to decrease student absences at the secondary school level. Appendices include copies of information contained in the student handbook and Code of Honor handbook related to attendance policies governing the school site where the program was implemented. Other appendices include a questionnaire, referral form, and cover letter.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholary and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other professionals in the field and in hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: Carl David Brown
Student's name

Minor contributions of a professional character and comparable nonprofessional assistance may also be acknowledged.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

1.1 Background

The practicum setting was a high school located in an area of North Central Florida that is predominantly rural in nature. The primary economic bases are agricultural with the exception of several small manufacturing plants and a large industry located in the county seat 25 miles away. The economic status of many families served by the practicum site is low as would be expected in an agricultural area. All types of family structures are found in the surrounding community with either single parent or two parent families being the most common. The high school serves outlying areas at the southern end of the county, as well as four unconsolidated and three consolidated towns where most of the population is concentrated.

The practicum was conducted at a high school serving students in grades nine through 12 where the total enrollment was 436 for the 1989 - 1990 school year. Class sizes vary with most averaging between 15 and 18 students. The writer is a vocational instructor and is one of 36 teachers employed at the site where there is a ratio of one teacher per 12 students. The instructional personnel are supported by a staff of 19 non-instructional personnel. The school site is administered by a principal and an assistant principal. There is one dean of students, one guidance counselor and one occupational specialist.

The school population was composed of 69 percent White, 27 percent Black, and four percent Asian and Hispanic students. Attendance figures for the 1988-89 school year showed that Black students had a higher percentage of absences than either White, Asian, or Hispanic students. The dropout rate for the last two years has been 17 students each year with the majority of those being White.

The educational level of the adult population in the area served by the practicum site was 10.7, according to the United States Census. The writer felt that parental attitudes towards education may have been affected by the educational levels of the parents. This combined with student attitudes towards education, family structures, and the low economic base of many of the students' backgrounds may have contributed to reasons for student absences from school.

1.2 Problem Statement

An overview of the situation that existed at the practicum site is one in which 43 students in grades nine through 12 received failing grades for the first semester (90 days) due to excessive absenteeism. The number of students that were unsuccessful in their appeal or did not appeal was 30. The writer was of the opinion that these failures occurred because:

1. Students did not appeal failures.
2. Students were not cognizant of the appeals process.

3. Students were not apprised of the individual's number of absences or the consequences regarding the absences.
4. Parents were not apprised of the critical situation regarding excessive absenteeism.

The writer was of the opinion that the situation that should have existed was one where:

1. Students in danger of failing due to absenteeism were notified that failures due to those absences could be appealed.
2. Students in jeopardy of failing because of excessive absenteeism were made aware of how the appeals process functioned.
3. The student was made aware of the individual's number of absences prior to reaching the failing point.
4. Parents were made aware that failure was the critical outcome for absenteeism from school by the child.

The discrepancy between what actually existed and what should have existed was the problem that this practicum was designed to solve.

Student absenteeism is an interruption of the learning process and approaches 2,500,000 daily in

public schools across the United States (Rood, 1987). The more often a student is absent the less adequately that student can be expected to participate in or understand classroom activities. According to Rood, it is common for many high school students to miss as many as 90 days in an ordinary school year.

The state requires "regular attendance" by students which is defined as attendance in each class at least 27 days of each 30 day grading period. Based on this definition, the school board that governs the practicum site has mandated a rule concerning attendance that is followed by all high schools in the district. This rule states that students will be allowed 10 total absences during each semester or three grading periods. If a student misses 11 days, that student must be given a failing grade for all courses that have recorded 11 absences. The school board policy makes provisions for appeals by students concerning their absences. The appeal process must be started at least five days after the student receives the semester report card indicating failure due to attendance. That

student must then submit a written appeal signed by the student's parent or guardian to the principal. A committee then reviews the appeals. Those with major medical documentation are usually waivered immediately. Other appeals may require the student and parent or guardian to appear before the committee in order to answer questions concerning the absences. After the appeal is heard, the committee has five days to render a decision. The committee must either waive the student's failing grades or deny the appeal, basing its decision on circumstances and evidence presented by the student or parent or guardian. If the appeal is denied, the failing grades received by the student will stand as the semester grades. The six member Appeals Committee consists of two teachers, the school guidance counselor, a parent, a representative from the community, and the school principal. The principal serves as an non-voting ex-officio member, but can ask questions of the student or guardian during the appeals process.

It was easy to establish the situation that should have existed at the high school as being

regular attendance of students as prescribed by the school board. The problem that existed at the practicum site was the number of students that received failing grades due to absences. For the first 90 days of school, 43 students in grades nine through 12 received failing grades due to an excess number of absences. Of those 43 students, only 19 students went through the appeals process and only 13 of those students were granted a successful waiver of failing grades.

Several reasons were identified for the large number of students who either did not appeal or whose appeals were denied. Some students did not fully understand the school board attendance policy and offered reasons for absences that the Appeals Committee could not excuse. Other students were unsure of the appeals process and missed the five day time limit for appeal, while others simply chose not to appeal. Some of the students that failed or would have failed for the first semester grading period were students that eventually dropped out of school. The school principal, the assistant principal, a teacher who sits on the Appeals Committee and several faculty

members have expressed their concern that students who received failing grades may otherwise have passed if it were not for the attendance policy. A complex problem occured in that there was no documentation of students having been warned that they were in jeopardy of failing due to nonattendance.

Students were made aware of the attendance policy through two publications that were sent home with them. Both the Student Handbook (Appendix A: 28) and the Code of Honor Handbook (Appendix B: 30) contained the school board's policy on attendance. At the beginning of the school year both publications were distributed to and reviewed with the students.

The school administration was willing to employ a process described by the writer that would be designed to decrease the number of student failures by 50 percent due to absenteeism. Documentation of consultations with students in an attempt to decrease nonattendance and to increase awareness of the appeals process needed to be implemented. A teacher that served on the Appeals Committee agreed to serve as mentor for this

practicum. The writer communicated the desire to work with these "at-risk" students and received a pledge of support from many of the school's faculty.

1.3 Outcome Objectives

Students that were in danger of failing for the second semester due to nonattendance served as the target population of this practicum. The target population was identified by faculty members at the school site based on the number of absences a student had from class. Individual counseling sessions with students from the target group were held as a means of intervention in order to decrease absenteeism. Students were informed of the school board attendance policy and encouraged to attend school. Students were also made aware of the appeals process and were encouraged to submit an appeal, if necessary.

Students' success in school should be the priority of all educators, but in order to have the opportunity to succeed, the student must be in school on a regular basis. Thirty students at the

practicum site failed the first semester due to nonattendance. Based on this number, there was a definite need for intervention with the target group in order to reduce the number of failures for the second semester.

The outcomes of this practicum were expressed in the objectives that follow:

1. Within a designated period of 12 weeks, 75 percent of the students identified as members of the target group will have participated in an intervening counseling process. Students will be aware of the individual's standing in relation to absences and the appeals process by correctly answering all questions on an exit interview questionnaire (Appendix C: 32).

2. Within a designated period of 12 weeks, 100 percent of the target group will have been informed of the individual's status in regards to absenteeism from school as evidenced by documentation with signatures obtained during the intervention counseling process.

3. At the conclusion of the appeals process, 50 percent fewer students will receive failing grades for nonattendance after going through intervention counseling when compared with the number that failed during the first semester with no counseling.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Many factors contribute to absenteeism of students. Gottfredson (1985) viewed information from a national study of delinquency prevention programs. Gottfredson concluded from this research that teenage employment decreases school attendance.

Hegner (1987) examined chronic student attendance and tardiness problems. Hegner described how chronic offenders were identified. In addition, methods were listed that were used to individually assess those offenders.

The most appropriate service to intervene with the problem is identified after the assessment. Hegner listed support groups, social service agencies, and alternative education programs as means of intervening with the problem. Hegner emphasized the importance of establishing the needs of students and working with students' families and intervening agencies to meet those

needs and resolve conflicts that were expressed as absences and tardiness.

Ferguson and Killingsworth's (1987) research established that children would less likely be dropouts if school attendance problems were monitored. This was done by making certain that students understood the importance of school and school attendance. Involving parents and maintaining close communication between them and teachers was an important part of their strategy.

At the San Jacinto Unified School District of California, a program was developed to increase student attendance. Wickert (1987) described the procedure as a coordinated effort on the part of faculty and administrators. Communication with parents and students was initiated regarding attendance at school. Students were encouraged to set goals and have good attendance through a reward and recognition incentive program. Wickert cites a 3.2 percent attendance improvement as evidence of the success of the program.

Another research study on absenteeism was conducted in the Pacific Northwest. This research done by de Jung and Duckworth (1986) involved

administrators, faculty, and students from six high schools. Variables were examined that were believed to be contributors to absences among students. These variables were identified as ones dealing with classes taught, teaching practices used and teacher personal characteristics. Other variables involved students for the most part. These were identified in de Jung and Duckworth's research as student ability, the number of students per class, the grades earned by students, and the time of day. All of these factors contributed to absence rates, but de Jung and Duckworth admitted further research was necessary in order to provide additional data for absence reduction among students.

Eastwold (1989) described successful efforts in establishing effective attendance policies as beginning with clear and well publicized expectations. Consistent policies followed by everyone and parent involvement are also necessary. Holding students accountable and responsible for their actions puts the problem of absenteeism where it belongs. More "hands-on" activities and flexible but challenging curriculum

in addition to remediation programs encouraged high attendance. Eastwold's research showed that by implementing such policies and using counseling techniques, truancy among secondary students was effectively reduced.

Rood (1989) maintained that there were a number of student traits that were representative of nonattenders. Absenteeism increased as student age increased. Girls missed more school than boys in the first three years of high school and minority students were absent more often than white students. Rood contended that students with higher grades have better attendance as do students involved in college preparatory programs. Involvement in extracurricular activities also encouraged good attendance. The author stated that students from a one parent family have lower attendance than students from more traditional type families.

Andrews (1986) believed that the greatest strides toward curbing absenteeism was in the area where administrators had the most control. This was in attendance policy and practices. Problems that contributed to absenteeism were excessive

parent permissiveness, a time consuming appeal process, and teacher frustration concerning the existing policy. Andrews believed that teacher input, informing parents, and analyzing existing problems could help eliminate an unwieldy attendance policy. Andrews contended that successful attendance policies are developed when you pay attention to due process such as student handbooks and class discussions on attendance.

In selecting a solution strategy for this practicum, the research outlined above was carefully reviewed and examined. Conversations with educational consortium specialists and occupational specialists also weighed heavily on the strategy selected. Miller (1986) stated in an article on attendance that contacting truants personally, involving truants in counseling and maintaining accurate records were ways to improve attendance.

The time frame worked within was the last 12 weeks of the second semester at the practicum site. A negative factor about this time frame was that some students had already missed an excess of 10 days and benefited little from the counseling

from a preventative aspect. However, a positive factor was that these students benefited from an increased awareness of the appeal process and were encouraged to submit appeals.

The target group was selected by the faculty and consisted of those students who had missed five or more days of any class. These students were pulled from the teacher's class from which they were referred. Counseling sessions with the writer or the Occupational Specialist and the target students were conducted. Consumable materials for the counseling effort were provided from ordinary administrative supplies. The Career Resource Center served as the room for counseling as it was central to most classes at the practicum site. The school attendance secretary provided data related to student attendance as necessary for comparisons or for identifying possible target individuals. During the session, the counselor informed the student about the teacher's concern, the school board policy, and the appeal process. To make certain that the information was understood, an exit interview questionnaire was completed by the student. Student awareness of

individual attendance status was evidenced by documentation that was signed by the counselor and counseled student.

The writer's practicum mentor helped develop a large part of the solution strategy. The mentor assisted the writer in developing critical thinking skills necessary for implementing the practicum. The mentor also suggested actions that would curtail absences and help with the appeal process. Miller's (1986) article on attendance and recomendations for improving school attendance figured strongly into the practicum solution strategy. Based on the works cited previously by Hegner (1987) and Ferguson (1987) the strategy was planned to assess student needs and monitor attendance problems. Variables affecting student attendance were noted (de Jung and Duckworth, 1986) and communication with parents (Wickert, 1987) about student absences was established (Eastwold, 1989). Parents were informed of the counseling process by mailing them a photocopy of the exit interview questionnaire.

CHAPTER III

Method

Resources

Among the resources utilized by the writer was a seminar related to truancy and student problems. Although nothing specific from the seminar was included in the practicum, it offered the opportunity to use critical thinking in determining reasons for student absences. These critical thinking skills were applied by the writer and mentor throughout the implementation of the praticum.

Resources that were provided for conducting the practicum included the Career Resource Center. The central location of this room to other rooms at the school site was an asset in the practicum's implementation. Target students were counseled in the Career Resource Center. Counseling sessions were conducted by the school's Occupational Specialist or by the practicum writer. The Occupational Specialist was trained in the

counseling process and correct use of practicum instruments prior to the first counseling session.

The use of paper and consumable supplies by a teacher's aide in producing the necessary forms for this pracitcum were approved in advance by the school site principal. The attendance secretary helped provide attendance figures which were necessary for monitoring the practicum. An office secretary helped with filing and correspondence. Eventually all 36 of the teachers and 436 students at the school site were involved in some aspect of the practicum. Release time from other reponsibilities for everyone participating and helping with the practicum was approved in advance by the school administration.

A computer terminal and printer were used by the attendance secretary for obtaining information relating to student attendance. A photocopy machine was used by an office secretary to duplicate forms and materials needed for the practicum. Other resources included the chairs and equipment normally found in classrooms.

Implementation

After obtaining administrative approval and coordinating the practicum with the mentor, the first step in starting the practicum was to distribute referral forms (Appendix D: 34) to each teacher on staff at the practicum site. The teachers refered students that were in jeopardy of failing due to nonattendance. While these students represented the target population, a comparison was made with the official school attendance records to see how closely the records matched the referral forms submitted by teachers. The school attendance secretary provided attendance records and proved to be instrumental in the practicum.

The second step involved counseling the student. The major emphasis of the counseling session was to assess student needs and attempt to intervene if possible (Sherraden, 1986) in order to eliminate the truancy problem. The target student was counseled during the class period from which the student was referred. Either the staff Occupational Specialist or the writer led the counseling session. The Occupational Specialist

participated in a training session in order to learn the outcomes of the practicum and the most appropriate way to counsel the target student. The student was informed of the attendance problem and the attendance policy. The school board's appeal process was also reviewed.

The third step involved an exit interview questionnaire that the target student completed at the end of the counseling session. The student also indicated an understanding of status regarding attendance by signing an appropriate document.

The fourth step was to keep the parents informed. This was done by mailing them three items of information after the interview with the student. The mailing included a photocopy of the exit interview, a signed absence awareness form, and a cover letter (Appendix E: 36) that explained the counseling process.

The fifth step involved a follow-up with either the referring teacher or attendance secretary. This was done to determine if the intervention helped with the students that were

chronic truants. The follow-up also helped to provide feed back to the teacher.

The sixth step involved assisting those students that failed due to nonattendance. The writer encouraged the students to prepare documentation for the appeal. The writer also encouraged the students to submit to the principal the appropriate form for appealing failing grades prior to the deadline.

A contingency plan was made for habitual truants. If after participating in the counseling session, students from the target group continued to miss school, additional counseling sessions were held. For students in this category, the process was started again at the second step.

It was feasible that during the course of the practicum a counseling problem might have occured which would have required the attention of the school guidance counselor. Although no such problem developed, students from the target group who would have benefit from professional counseling would have been referred as encountered. The guidance counselor was a

resource that was available to the writer if the need had existed.

The time frames of the counseling sessions were designed to be loose. This was necessary in order to work around the schedules of the writer and Occupational Specialist. All of the target group was contacted for the first time by the end of the sixth week after implementation.

Monitoring

A plan was developed and adopted for monitoring progress after implementation. The plan involved keeping track of previously counseled students' attendance. The target group was comprised of 46 students that were referred by teachers. Of the 46, only 12 were involved in two counseling sessions. It was the writer's opinion that the number of students referred by teachers did not accurately reflect all those that were in jeopardy of failing due to absences. The writer monitored the absences of all students and found that there were 92 students by the sixth week of the practicum's implementation that had missed six

or more days of school. Concerns expressed by some of the faculty, the practicum writer, the practicum mentor, and the school principal resulted in the further application of critical thinking skills. A counseling program was developed that utilized the exit interview questionnaire. This program informed all the students at the practicum site of the number of absences each student had as well as the procedure to be followed in order to submit a successful appeal. It was critical that the students be informed in order to prevent the number of failures that the figures indicated there could be. This task was accomplished by having each faculty member counsel a group of students. Each faculty member received instruction on the counseling process and was directed in the proper use of the exit interview questionnaire.

Evaluation

After completing the counseling process, student awareness of the appeal process and individual absence standing was indicated on an

exit interview questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to demonstrate student awareness of pertinent information discussed in the counseling session. The counseled student reinforced the information covered by correctly supplying the information requested on the questionnaire. This instrument also provided documentation that the student was aware of attendance status and the appeal process. A copy of the document was mailed to the student's parent and a copy was placed on file for the Appeals Committee.

All students referred to the writer by teachers became part of the target population. Each member of the target population went through the counseling process. The counseling process was conducted by the writer or Occupational Specialist.

A comparison of the number of successful appeals presented between the two school semesters was made. During the first semester 30 students failed due to nonattendance after completion of the appeal process. After the counseling intervention process described by this practicum, 23 students failed due to nonattendance for the

second semester at the completion of the appeal process. Records provided by the school attendance secretary and Appeals Committee were used to make the comparisons. The number of successful appeals and the reduction in number of failures of members in the target group show that the practicum and the intervention counseling sessions had an overall positive effect. Continuation of a program similar to this could complement existing attendance policies and could help control excessive absenteeism. Granted, if attendance policies change so that attendance is not mandatory, this program would serve only an informatory function.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Through several sessions of brainstorming and discussions between the practicum writer, the mentor and school administration the writer's practicum evolved into the format presented. Strategies were developed to create a plan of action to decrease student truancy, to comprehend reasons for that truancy and to transform those reasons for absences to actual student attendance at school. Although there were several suggestions for implementing the practicum, discussions led the writer to function as a facilitator of the appeal program by increasing student awareness of the problems that nonattendance could cause. Through participation in the counseling session and then applying that information to a questionnaire, students were exposed to a thinking process that increased awareness of the individual's resposibility for attendance at school. A comment section was

provided on the questionnaire that many students used to express attitudes about the attendance policy. The use of the school's attendance computer allowed the writer to have access to all attendance figures for the school year. This made it possible to incorporate student attendance information into the critical thinking skills activities that resulted in the practicum.

Evaluation of the practicum was based on the criteria as set forth in the outcome objectives. In evaluating and comparing the results of the practicum with the intended outcomes, the following was established:

1. All students belonging to the target group were involved in intervention counseling sessions. This amounted to 100 per cent of the 46 students identified by faculty members as the target group. All students were made aware of the individual's number of absences and answered correctly all questions on an exit interview questionnaire.

2. By the end of the eighth week of the practicum, 100 percent of the target group was informed of individual absences as evidenced by signed documentation. A photocopy of the instrument was mailed with a cover letter explaining the counseling process to the student's parents.

3. At the conclusion of the appeal process, 47 students received failing grades for the second semester. Of this 47, only 19 students belonged to the target group. Of the 19 students, 14 students were successful in presenting appeals and had the mandatory failure waived.

The last outcome objective was the only one that was not met. If it had been worded so as to include only the target group, the objective would have been met since only five students from the target group received failing grades upon the conclusion of the appeal process. The number of failures due to nonattendance increased from 43 students during the first semester to 47 students

during the second semester. However, the number of successful appeals the second semester more than doubled. The number of successful appeals the first semester was 13 and the number of successful appeals the second semester was 28. In order to meet the 50 per cent requirement as set in the last outcome objective only 15 students could fail. A comparison of the numbers gathered show that 19 students failed and thus the last objective was not met.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Although the writer's practicum project did not result in the elimination of the problem of excessive student absences at the practicum site, it did serve as an instrument of awareness. The solutions and strategies designed for the practicum would be expected to increase student awareness of excessive absenteeism. In situations with similar attendance policies and appeal processes the solutions and strategies established in the practicum would be expected to reduce student failures. The results of the writer's practicum substantiates other research concerning student attendance. Research shows that maintaining an informed student body regarding attendance procedures, establishing effective lines of communication with parents, and combining these with an effective attendance policy will result in better student attendance.

Available resources were used as effectively as possible. Recommended uses of resources would include the development of instruments that could be designed with illustrations and accented with attractive graphics. Prior to the start of a school year, human resources could be developed through a teacher in-service education program. This program should be geared to instruct teachers about the counseling process and materials used in the process. Proceeding in such a manner would allow the issue of attendance to be addressed early in the school year.

An additional objective that would make the program more effective would be:

> After particpation in an attendance awareness program, all students will be aware of the school board's attendance policy and appeal process as evidenced by correctly answering 100 percent of the questions on an exit interview questionnaire.

By accomplishing the above objective, every student will know their standing in relation to school attendance and will be aware of the importance of regular school attendance.

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Appendix A

Copy of Student Handbook Attendance Policy

The attendance policy at the practicum site is explained in the Student Handbook which is issued to students at the beginning of the school year.

Appendix A

Copy of Student Handbook Attendance Policy

FAILURE FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

1. Florida Statutes require the regular attendance of a student. They further charge the parent with the responsibility of explaining the absence of their child when an absence occurs. The purpose of this policy is to define regular attendance for the procedure whereby parents and school authorities can cooperatively ensure regular attendance.

2. "Regular attendance" is defined as attendance in each class/subject at least twenty-seven (27) days of each thirty (30) day grading period. Attendance shall be the actural presence of a student in the class/subject or away from the class/subject or school on an educational activity which is a part of the approved school program.

3. In addition, to maintain a satisfactory level of academic performance, reasonable effort and regular attendance shall be a requirement for promotion/credit.

4. Three (3) unexcused tardies in any class/subject shall equal one (1) unexcused absence in that class/subject. The absence shall count in sub-part 4. above and in sub-part 6. below as "unexcused".

5. Ten (10) total absences shall be allowed during each semester in each class/subject before a failing grade of "F" or "U" is indicated. A student's absences due to participation in a school related activity approved by the administration will not apply to this limit of total allowable absences.

6. Absences shall be determined by school officials to be "excused" or "unexcused." Excused absences will allow the student to make up any school work missed during the absence. Unexcused absence will automatically give the student a failing grade for school work missed due to the absence. Excused absences shall include those absences which result from:

   a. illness of the student,
   b. illness in the family which requires the student's presence in the home,
   c. death in the family, or
   d. extraordinary circumstances approved by the principal, in advance when possible.

FAILURE FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL (Cont'd)

7. The student will have up to five (5) working days following the receipt of his/her report card in which to appeal any failing grade due to this attendnace policy. The appeal shall be in writing, on a form prescribed by the principal, and signed by the parent.

8. In each school, an appeals committee will be established to hear all evidence presented which directly related to any failing grade due to this attendance policy. The committee shall review all relevant information and may require the attendance of the parent, guardian, and/or student.

Appendix B

Copy of Code of Honor Attendance Policy

The attendance policy is explained in this District School Board publication which is distributed to students at the beginning of the school year.

Appendix B

Copy of Code of Honor Attendance Policy

VI. ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Florida Statute 232.01 requires regular school attendance between ages six and sixteen. Florida Statute 232.02 defines "regular" attendance:

"Regular attendance is the actual attendance of a pupil during a school day."

Florida Statute 232.022 futher defines attendance:

"Pupils may be counted in attendance only if they are

actually present at school or are away from school on...an educational activity which constitutes a part of the school-approved instructional program for the pupil."

Parents are made legally responsible for the attendance of their children:

"Each parent of a child within the compulsory attendance age shall be responsible for such child's school attendance as required by law. The absence of a child from school shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this section." (F.S. 232.09)

Sometimes absences are necessary; therefore, Florida Statutes require absences to be explained:

"Whenever a child of compulsory school attendance age is absent without the permission of the person in charge of the school, the parent of the child shall, as soon as practible after learning of the absence, report and explain the cause of such absence to the teacher or principal of the school. If the parent of the child knows of the absence, failure to make such report and explanation shall be prima facie evidence of the child's being absent with the consent of connivance of the parent." (F.S. 232.10)

Students/parents or guardians have the responsibility after an excused absence to request the make-up assignment from their teachers within three (3) school days.

When absences continue and are not adequately explained, Florida Statutes prescribe the procedure and penalties:

"In each case of non-enrollment or of non-attendance upon the part of a child who is required to attend some school, when no valid reason for such non-enrollment or non-attendance is found, the superintendent shall institute a criminal prosecution against the child's parent.

In case a child becomes an habitual truant, the attendance assistant shall file with the Circuit Court a complaint alleging the facts, and the child shall be dealt with as a dependent child according to the provisions of Chapter 39.

Proceedings or prosecutions under the provisions of this chapter may be begun by the superintendent, by an attendance assistant, by the probation officer of the county, by the executive officer of any court of competent jurisdiction, or by an officer of any court of competent jurisdiction, or a duly authorized agent of the Department of Education." (F.S. 232.19)

At the Elementary and Middle School levels, if a student is absent for ten (10) days during any grading period, he/she may be subject to failure for the subjects or courses in which he/she is enrolled during the period.

At the High School level, "regular attendance" is defined as attendance in each class/subject at least twenty-seven (27) days of each thirty (30) day grading period. Attendance shall

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be the actual presence of a student in the class/subject or away from the class/subject or school on an educational activity which is a part of the approved school program. In addition, to maintain a satisfactory level of academic performance, reasonable effort and regular attendance shall be a requirement for promotion/credit. Ten (10) total absences shall be allowed during each semester in each class/subject before a failing grade of "F" or "U" is indicated.

A student's absences due to participation in a school related activity approved by the administration will not apply to this limit of total allowable absences.

Absences shall be determined by school officials to be "excused" or "unexcused". Excused absences will allow the student to make up any school work missed during the absence. Unexcused absence will automatically give the student a failing grade for all school work missed due to the absence. Excused absences shall include those absences which result from:

1. illness of the student,
2. illness in the family which requires the student's presence in the home,
3. death in the family, or
4. extraordinary circumstances approved by the principal, in advance when possible.

The student will have up to five (5) working days following the receipt of his/her report card in which to appeal any failing grade due to this attendance policy. The appeal shall be in writing, on a form prescribed by the principal, and signed by the parent.

In each school, an appeals committee will be established to hear all evidence presented which directly related to any failing grade due to this attendance policy. The committee shall review all relevant information and may require the attendance of the parent, guardian, and/or student.

Appendix C

Exit Interview Questionnaire

This instrument will be used to determine the target student's awareness of information covered in the intervention counseling session.

Appendix C

Exit Questionnaire for Student Absence Consultation

Date_____

Student's Name_____

Referred By _____

Class and Period _____ _____

Number of days absent _____

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The school board requires that if a student is absent for more than _____ days of school (or a class) in a semester then that student will _____ for the semester.

2. Students can _____ failing grades that have been received because of absences.

3. Students have _____ days to submit a written appeal to the principal after failing grades are received at the end of the semester.

4. Those absences that have _____ documentation or that are approved in advance by the _____ may be successfully appealed.

****

I am aware of the school board attendance policy and realize that the above named teacher has expressed concern about the number of absences I have from school. I am aware of the appeals process and how to go about appealing failing grades due to absences.

Signed _____

Date_____

Counseled by_____

Comments:

Appendix D

Student Referral Form

This form is will be distributed to teachers in order for them to refer students for intervention counseling.

Appendix D

Student Referral Form

MEMO TO : Teachers

FROM:

SUBJECT: Attendance Policy

As a NOVA Master's Degree Practicum, I am trying to identify students who may be in danger of failing due to the 10 day attendance policy. If you feel that any of your students may be in jeopardy of failing due to absences at any time during the semester, please fill out the form that is provided and return it to my box. It is my intention to have consultations with the students that you are concerned about in order to lessen the number that fail due to absences.

I will appreciate your help and support on this project.

STUDENT NAME _____

COURSE _____

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME _____

DATE_____ NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT_____

COMMENTS_____

_____

_____

Would it be convenient for me to meet with the above student 5 - 10 minutes of your class period?

Appendix E

Cover Letter

This letter is mailed to the target student's parents or guardians after counseling.

Appendix E

Cover Letter

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____:

We at High School are very concerned that ____(Student's Name)____ may fail _____(Class)_____ second semester due to the school board's attendance policy. Attached is a copy of the attendance policy that is contained in the Student Handbook. A copy of the attendance policy is also in the Student Code of Conduct booklet. Both of these publications were distributed to our students at the beginning of the school year.

I have talked with ___(Student's Name) and he/she is aware of this policy and knows that he/she has _____ absences in ___(Class)_____. In the case of excessive absences or emergencies, a student may appeal failing grades within five days after receiving their report cards at the end of the semester. Appropriate documentation and a parent conference is usually required. Appeal forms are avaiable at the school's main office. We would appreciate your cooperation and encouragement of ___(Student's Name)_____ attendance at school.

Please feel free to contact me or any school representative if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Absentee Counselor